Totum Enim Quod Intelligo, Volo Ut Qui Me Audit Intelligat

An Examination of S. Augustine as a Teacher of Catechumens in the *De Catechizandis Rudibus*

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Abstract

Many individuals in the ancient western world, whether Greek, Roman or otherwise, have captured the hearts and minds of their contemporaries and us moderns alike. Few, however, have captivated quite as many as Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius in the North of Africa. Inarguably one of the brightest thinkers of his age, even of all human history, Augustine's influences on philosophy and Christian theology have changed the intellectual landscape of the western world even into our time. One can scarcely handle either of those topics without at least coming across his name or ideas, and yet how deeply has any man, even one entirely devoted to the saint's work, really understood him, that creator of, as Dr. Philip Cary put it, 'the inner self'[1].

[1] Cary, *Augustine's*.

I – Purpose, Primary Resources and Method

Working with Augustine's works is, to say the least, a challenging task due to the immensity of his literary corpus. To complicate matters further, it is not only the sheer volume of work that makes things difficult for even an advanced scholar,[2] but the variety of issues that the saint addresses. When he is not busy whisking his readers (or, in the case of his sermons, hearers), off into the heights and depths of his immensely personal and religious experiences in *The Confessions*, he is busy working through the complex philosophical, political and theological problems of his day. Therefore, while Augustine has been profitably mined for hundreds of years for information about a variety of issues, it seems the surface has only just been scratched.

My original intent in the course of research was to glean at least an introductory understanding of Augustine's views on the sacraments, particularly of Baptism. The goal in doing this was to help me understand Augustine's views in order to enhance my understanding of how his theology would affect his intellectual and theological descendants, particularly those of the Lutheran Reformation. After a cursory reading of Augustine's *De Catechizandis Rudibus*[3] *(DCR)* and through various quotations of Augustine in Harmless' *Augustine and the Catechumenate*[4], I was quite intrigued to find many instances of language that would later be echoed by the Lutheran Fathers.[5]

However, the further I read into these works, the more I began to realize that addressing Augustine's views on Baptism in a vacuum would do a great injustice to the saint and his life's

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[2] Brown admits as much in the preface to his biography (pp. ix – xi).
[3] See the various allegorical/typological uses of scriptural texts in this work (e.g. p. 303). These will be expounded upon further in later sections.
[4] See the quotes from Augustine's *Tractates on the Gospel of John* quoted on p. 318.
[5] Both allegorical and typological uses of scriptural texts are prevalent in Luther's writings (e.g. Small Catechism), as are words about the union of water and Word in Baptism.

work. Doing so would make a two-dimensional, systematic theologian out of an incredibly complex man whose own interests went beyond simply writing polemics against heresies and tracts on mysteries like the Blessed Trinity or the sacraments. It became abundantly clear that, in order to understand Augustine's views on Baptism, it would be necessary to examine him first as a teacher, not of rhetoric, as he had once been in Milan, but of the Christian faith, of catechumens. To do anything else would be to misrepresent the man and his thought by removing him from his greater context as a teacher, where he shows himself to be more than a cerebral theologian, whose works can be cherry-picked for passages that would seem to prove a certain point.

However, let it be clearly stated: this is not to say that an examination of Baptism will be altogether abandoned in this work. Rather, what has been done is the rectification of the original proposal by correcting the initial assumption that Baptism in Augustine's ideology could be examined in isolation, thus shifting the primary focus onto Augustine's catechetical program rather than on Baptism itself. So, as shall be shown, Baptism can be seen as the result of one finishing their catechetical regimen under Augustine. In a sense, then, Baptism was a sort of proof or 'diploma' (if one would allow that term to be used) that grants an individual full entrance into the Christian community.

In order to explore Augustine's role as a teacher, the principal primary source that will be examined is the *DCR* along with relevant passages from other works of Augustine.[6] This text has been chosen as the primary work to be examined over other literary works on

[6] Several of such references will come indirectly through works noted in my bibliography, rather than from my own personal copies of those references. I will cite the work that is in my bibliography, and then citation that that individual has listed.

education/teaching (e.g. *De Doctrina Christiana)* and sermons directed to Catechumens (e.g. 132) because it provides practical examples of how Augustine acted in his role as teacher. Other texts, like the *De Doctrina*, may deal with topics like proper textual interpretation in greater detail, but the *DCR* tells us about how Augustine taught the texts when they had been correctly interpreted. These primary sources will complimented by modern biographies of the saint, and especially by the work of Fr. William Harmless, to whom I am greatly indebted for his scholarly, yet highly readable book.

Using these sources, I will plan to dissect Augustine's plan for teaching catechumens. This will first require brief examinations of the religious, social, and political climates in Augustine's day, along with discussion of his own experiences as a catechumen.[7] These are critical because they all affected Augustine's teaching, as shall be shown. Following that, I will move into an examination of how Augustine worked with various groups of individuals and put his intimate knowledge of the social climate into effect. After this, the theoretical aspects, that is to say the curriculum Augustine used, will be examined. Finally, a brief summary will be given of how these various points played out for Augustine.[8]

II – Contemporary Society

An understanding of the times in which Augustine lived is a critical component of understanding the man himself.[9] It cannot be understated that the fourth and fifth centuries were ones of great changes for Christians, first in the political sphere with the Great Persecution, followed by the adoption of Christianity as Constantine's personal religion, and then the

[7] Both of these points have been greatly aided by the works of Brown, Van der Meer and Cross.
[8] I owe much to Fr. Harmless, who lays out a similar plan in his work on pp. 24 - 36.
[9] Fr. Harmless notes as much in the second chapter of his work.

recognition of Christianity as the state religion by Theodosius. However, more important for the study of Augustine as teacher is the general theological atmosphere and those religious controversies[10], the Donatist heresy in particular, that existed at these times. These environmental factors undoubtedly shaped the Bishop's theological outlook and literary output,[11] but the extent to which they affected his approach to catechesis is what must will explored in detail.

Up until the Pelagian controversies of the fifth century, which would consume Augustine's life and define his work from the second decade of the 400's,[12] the greatest concern for Augustine was the schismatic church of the Donatists in North Africa. This body was so prevalent in Hippo during Augustine's life that it threatened to eclipse or even to force the Church catholic into extinction,[13] and it was only with imperial action that the sect's growth was curbed.

At the heart of Donatist practice was the rebaptism of catholic Christians as a sign of entry into their 'pure' congregation of saints; the problem this controversy posed for African Christianity as a whole, but particularly for Augustine as bishop of Hippo, cannot be understated. It was so significant a problem because it took this particular sign of one's identity as a Christian and threatened its validity for a great number of people, and the distress this caused for Augustine's parishioners would not have been lost on him, their bishop. This was not just some heady theological and theoretical problem either: we know that Augustine's parishioners had exposure to the Donatists, if not by their own direct dealings with members of the sect, then by

[10] Not to say there is no blending of political and ecclesiastical happenings – the outlawing of the Donatist heresy shows that there was, and even the origin of this heresy was spawned by the Diocletianic persecutions.
[11] One need look no further than the title of the *De Baptismo Contra Dontistas* to see this point.
[12] Brown, *Augustine*, pp. 340-1, 354-2.
[13] Van der Meer, *Augustine*, pp. 102-17.

exposure to Augustine's sermons.[14] The influence of this sect must be taken into account when reading a work like the *DCR* because, as we shall see with specific textual examples below, it will inform Augustine of what needs to be taught to his catechumens in order to keep them from defecting away to Donatism.

While the effects of Donatism on Augustine's catechesis are important, another factor must also be taken into account, viz. the religious system of classical paganism. In the early days of Christianity, and even as recently as fifty years before Augustine's birth, pagans held enormous, if not all (depending on the point of history in question) of the influence in the Roman Empire. Moreover, they still held enough influence even after the turn of the fifth century to earn for themselves a key place in the monumental polemical work that is Augustine's *City of God*.

In this age, where political power and religion (broadly defined) were so often inseparable, it would have been politically expedient for one to practice the popular religion of the time. With that said, as the patterns of power began to shift with the reign of Constantine and then with that of Theodosius, and as Christianity gradually began to be considered as a religion of major significance in the political sphere, issues often arise from the influx of pagans joining the Church.[15] This change is also important for understanding how Augustine approached catechesis, and specific examples of how Augustine address these issues, and others like it, will be explored at greater length below.

[14] E.g. Sermons 137; 164; 223; 292. It is nearly impossible to imagine though that, before their being outlawed, any person North Africa would have been ignorant of this group's existence, even without Augustine's sermons.
[15] Brown, pp. 227 – 30.

Finally, those attempting to understand Augustine as a teacher of catechumens must also be aware of the socio-religious climate as found among the common folk, that is those who were not as intimately involved in political matters. Augustine was acutely aware of the influences that paganism had on his congregation at Hippo, both directly and through its cultural legacy, and he was certainly not fond of seeing things like magical amulets being used by Christians.[16] Because of his concerns for the sanctity and spiritual wellbeing of his parishioners, he is quick to make sure that his catechetical program addresses such things as well.

In this same category of socio-religious factors to keep in mind, the use of other 'traditional and well-tried'[17] means of gaining religious knowledge were prevalent. Some of these were not inherently pagan in origin either, and were popular among people of Augustine's age. One need not look further than ancient texts like the *Somnium Scipionis* of Cicero, the story of Joseph in Genesis, or even tales about incubations and the dreams bestowed in the temples of Aesculapius to know what sorts of mystical experiences people found fascinating during this age. Yet, while Augustine is not as greatly concerned with talk of visions and other mystical experiences, he does not leave them altogether unaddressed.

III – *Et Veni Mediolanum ad Ambrosium Episopum*[18]

Much has also been said by other authors about the early life of Augustine, about the influence that his mother, S. Monica, had on him, and about his time spent among the Manicheans. Yet, it is not these experiences that are of particular interest here, but rather the

[16] Van der Meer, pp. 58 – 9; citing Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 7.6. Van der Meer also mentions magical amulets with the names of Christ or various biblical figures inscribed thereon.
[17] Brown, p. 244.
[18] Quoted by Brown, p. 61 from Augustine's *Confessions* V, xiii.

time Augustine spent immediately leading up to his Baptism. That is to say, the time he spent as a student of the Christian faith under the auspices of S. Ambrose of Milan.

Even though the two were not intimately acquainted,[19] it would be wrong to mitigate the influences of Ambrose on him. He was a man whom Augustine respected not necessarily as much on account of his rhetorical skills, but rather for the immensity of his learning and simple kindness.[20] He taught Augustine through his sermons and gave him ways to counter the Manicheans, whom Augustine had rejected, but against whom he had found himself unable to refute fully.[21] Augustine once said of the Milanese bishop, "[He] drew aside the veil of mystery and opened … the spiritual meaning of [scriptural] passages."[22] He was a teacher that broadened Augustine's mind and taught him to think of the Scriptures and the Christian faith as a whole in a new light. He made "passages [that] had been death to [him]"[23] into life giving ones.

Augustine, at the end of the fifth book in his *Confessions*, only a paragraph after crediting Ambrose with bringing Scripture to life for him, says that he "resolved … to live as a catechumen", no doubt due to Ambrose's influence. In addition, after he says this, he goes on in later books to describe the ways in which Ambrose cared for and instructed those people in his congregation[24], though Augustine himself was hesitant to disturb the man[25]. I reference this last point about Augustine's hesitancy not to show that Ambrose's influences on Augustine were somewhat impersonal (though by no means insignificant), but rather because Augustine's

[19] Brown, pp. 71-8.
[20] Ibid., p. 74.
[21] Ibid., V, xxv.
[22] Augustine, *Confessions,* VI, vi; trans. Boulding.
[23] Ibid., V, xxiv.
[24] The tale of Monica coming to him to discuss differing practices from congregation to congregation comes to mind (cf. *Confessions,* VI, ii).
[25] Ibid., VI, iii.

statement about Ambrose's silent reading is interesting. It goes to demonstrate my point, namely that Ambrose's influences on Augustine would later shape his own catechetical practices.

Certainly, this passage has been gleaned in times past for various reasons, including to show that the ancients usually read aloud, and indeed it could be interpreted now to mean in a plain way that Ambrose simply wanted to avoid being bothered, thus having his study time consumed by people's questions. However, it seems unlikely that Augustine's only intent in making this comment was to show how Ambrose valued his own time above aiding others (hardly a saintly quality!). I find that opinion untenable, however, as Augustine says that S. Ambrose was open to unannounced guests, and that would hardly be the practice of one who was worried about others wasting his time (this seems to be more of the young Augustine's preoccupation, than Ambrose's).

Rather, I contend that Augustine saw Ambrose's silent reading not merely as an issue of pragmatism, proper time management, or finding some respite from his usual business,[26] but rather as a pastoral/didactic concern. Augustine says, "We thought too that he might be apprehensive that if he read aloud, and any closely attentive listener were doubtful [*suspensus*] on any point, or the author he was reading used any obscure [*obscurius*] expressions, he would have to stop and explain various difficult problems [*exponere … de aliquibus difficilioribus dissertare quaestionibus*] that might arise, and after spending time on this be unable to read as much of the book as he wished."[27] This goes to show that Ambrose knew his audience quite well; he knew that materials that are more difficult would confound many of his average visitors

[26] This certainly is part of the issue, as Augustine says, "*Then we would steal away, guessing that in the brief tie he had seized for refreshment of his mind he was resting from the din of other people's affairs and reluctant to be called away to other business*." Ibid.

[27] Ibid. Latin words in parenthesis are provided by me from the original text, which is made available at: http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/latinconf/6.html

and thus shied away from exposing them to those *difficiliores quaestiones*. This didactic concern of knowing the capacities of one's pupils was not lost on Augustine either, as we shall see in the following sections.

In the end, Augustine and his companions, including his son Adeodatus, were baptized in Milan, and this great step forward for Augustine was due in no small part due to Ambrose's influence. Who would have helped him to overcome his superficial need for rhetorical flourish and taught him to dive into the meat of Christianity if not Ambrose?[28] How would he have learned how to interpret properly those Old Testament passages, like the flood story of Genesis, which presage Baptism, if it had not been for Ambrose?[29] Therefore, it will be shown in the following section that these Ambrosian influences helped to drive Augustine's catechetical program.

IV – Augustine's Goals as Pastor of the Christian Faithful

As was said above, it is all too easy, and often so enjoyable, to be swept up into Augustine's soaring whirlwind of thoughts. Yet, in saying that, it is all too easy at the same time to forget that Augustine was more than just a cerebral theologian, polemicist or neo-platonic philosopher. He was a bishop, the pastor of his flock, and as the name 'pastor' would imply, charged with the spiritual care and feeding of his flock. As a pastor, Augustine did not take a merely passive interest in the education of his catechumens, but rather he sought to drive his students to a deep interest in the faith, as he says, "*Quem [i.e. the catechumen] narrando*

[28] Ibid., V, xiii/xxiii.
[29] Ibid., V, xxiv.

volumus excitare."[30] More potent still was his desire that they be driven to an unfeigned love of God and neighbor, as he says:

> *In omnibus sane non tantum nos oportet intueri praecepti finem, quod est 'caritas de corde puro et conscientia bona et fide no ficta'*[31]*, quo ea quae loquimur cuncta referamus: sed etiam illius quem loquendo instruimus, ad id movendus atque iluc dirigendus adpectus est.*[32]

As a pastor, he also desired more than mere verbal assent to what he taught them, but wanted them to understand intimately what was being taught them. Take for example his sixty-seventh sermon, in which he chastises his congregation for making motions without thought to what was actually said:

> *In hoc ipso quod sonuit: 'Confiteor', pectora tutudistis. Tundere autem pectus quid est, nisi arguere quod latet in pectore, et evidenti pulsu occultum castigare peccatum? Quare hoc fecistis, nisi quia audistis: Confiteor tibi, Pater? Confiteor, audistis: qui confitetur, non attendistis. Nunc ergo advertite. Si, Confiteor, Christus dixit, a quo longe est omne peccatum…*[33]

He also shows a true desire for his students to understand as fully as he understands*: Totum enim quod intelligo, volo ut qui me audit intelligat.*[34] In saying this, he shows his concern for the future of the Church as a whole, which would only survive and even overcome its contemporary struggles through education about those struggles.

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[30] *De Catechizandis*, v.
[31] This quotation was noted as being from *I Tim.* i, 5 by the text's editor.
[32] *De Catechizandis, vi*. Please note: only Latin quotations longer than two full lines will be placed in block quotes in order to conserve space.
[33] Text made available at: http://www.augustinus.it/latino/discorsi/index2.htm
[34] Ibid., iii.

V – Augustine's Interactions with His Catechumens

While there should no longer be doubt about *what* Augustine wanted to achieve through catechesis or *what* influenced him, the question remains as to *how* this extraordinary man, whom we often think of as being caught up in waves of passion and risings to the Divine,[35] taught the people of his flock in that ordinary desert town in the North of Africa. Taking into account what has been stated in prior sections about the cultural climate of Augustine's North Africa and his own experiences as a catechumen, it is possible to read the *DCR* in a new light, and so better understand how Augustine achieved his catechetical goals, as stated immediately above. The primary way in which Augustine would do this was by knowing his catechumens on an intimate level, just as he saw Ambrose do with his own flock, and then adjusting his program to suit their needs.

He makes several mentions to Deogratias, the man to whom the *DCR* is addressed, about the examination of catechumens. The first major example encountered in the work shows his concern for those who come to him with an education in the liberal arts. He says of these that the methods employed in teaching them ought to be different, as they frequently will have already acquainted themselves with the Scriptures and various Christian writers, as is their habit.[36] He is also concerned that the teaching methods employed with these should be changed because he wishes to avoid making their education into the faith a loathsome thing,[37] saying

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[35] One is immediately drawn to paintings of him from recent centuries, which depict him as having visions of Christ, etc. See paintings by Philippe de Champaigne, Antonio Rodriguez or the fresco by Botticelli as examples.

[36] *De Catechizandis,* xii. He says of them: *... multa nostrarum scripturam litterarumque cognoverit… [S]olent omnia diligenter inquirere…*

[37] Ibid. He says: *Cum his itaque breviter agendum est, et non odiose inculcando quae norunt, sed modeste perstringndo.*

instead that these men should rather be induced to speak about what they have learned on their own.[38]

The reason that Augustine would wish for them to speak about the origins of their desire is twofold. In the first place, he says, "*Quod cum dixerit, tum si nobis noti sunt illi libri, aut ecclesiastica fama salem accepimus a catholice aliquo memorabili a viro esse conscriptos, laeti approbemus.*"[39] This again is related to the previously mentioned point, viz. that Augustine wants his students to have a great desire to learn. He is keen on making sure that his students do not hate to learn the Christian doctrines, but rather that they be encouraged to do so by the praises of more expert individuals.

However, this is not without moderation on Augustine's part. He makes it very clear that he has a desire for what they are learning through their own study to be correct. He says:

> *Si autem in alicuius haeretici volumina incurrit, et nesciens forte quod vera fides improbat, tenuit animo, et catholicum esse arbitratur; sedulo edocdendus est, praelata auctoritate univeralis Ecclesiae aliorumque doctissimorum hominum et disputationibus et scriptionibus in eius veritate florentium.*[40]

This fear of his flock falling into heresies was a real concern for Augustine, as the times were volatile for the Church at large, as mentioned in prior sections. Whether the Church militant was busy fighting the heresies of the Manicheans, the Donatists, or later, the Pelagians, there were many sects that would have been able to seduce a young, learned individual with their writings. Therefore, in order to take proper care of his catechumens, Bishop Augustine stands

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[38] Ibid. He says: *nec ipse sane inutiliter interrogatur, quibus rebus motus sit, ut velit esse christianus...*
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

ready to guard his catechumens against any such subtle influences on his catechumens, and he urges others to do likewise.

The second major group that Augustine informs Deogratias about is comprised of students that are learned in rhetoric or are grammarians, saying that they are a sort of middle class between the unlearned and the very learned.[41] His primary concern with these, however, is not what they may already know when they come for instruction, as it was with the above. Rather, he fears that, in their eloquence of speech, these men may despise their fellow Christians or even the Scriptures due to a perceived lack of polish on their speech.[42] In fact, this is an interesting point because it reveals a great preoccupation on the saint's part about rhetoric's use in the church,[43] a preoccupation that is quite curious due to Augustine's own history as a professor of rhetoric.

These worries about rhetoric are evidenced in the language used by Augustine when speaking of rhetoricians and grammarians. He speaks in a decidedly negative, or at minimum, ambivalent tone about these individuals. He speaks of them as being shallow, saying that they merely 'seem [*videntur*]' to excel 'the rest of mankind [*ceteris hominibus*]' because of their skill in speaking [*arte loquendi*[44]]. It is possible to see in this kind of language a finer point of Augustine's preoccupation, viz. that men are quick to look to outward signs of inward goodness. This tendency of men to look toward outer rather than inner beauty is so great that Augustine

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[41] Ibid, xiii. He says of them: *[qui] neque inter idiotas numerare audeas, neque inter illos doctissimos…*
[42] Ibid. He says: *Discant [Grammatici Oratoresque] non contemnere, quos cognoverint morum vitia quam verborum amplius devitare… Maxime autem isti docendi sunt Scripturas audire divinas, ne sordeat eis solidum eloquium, quia non est inflatum.*
[43] One can see a greater dialogue on this issue in particular in the fourth book of S. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana.*
[44] The translation of the *DCR* listed in the bibliography on p. 291 reads: "so far as the art of speaking is concerned". I believe this adds too much to the text. I take the ablative '*arte'* to be nothing more than an ablative of cause, meaning 'because of their skill in speaking'. Thus, "*qui loquendi arte ceteris hominibus excellere videntur*" means nothing more than "they who seem to excel the rest of mankind because of how they speak".

must even remind his friend, Deogratias, to be on guard against it so that he does not show undue favor to those silver-tongued men. It should also be noted, this concern is not too distanced from the one mentioned above about men listening to the words of Scripture and sermons without giving thought to the actual meaning of what is being said.

There is one final note that should also be made about these men and the changes Augustine is willing to make to his catechetical program for their benefit. Indeed, this change is worth noting because it furthers the noteworthiness of his teaching style, and it shows how indispensable an understanding of Augustine as a teacher is to comprehending properly his views on the Sacrament of Baptism. He says to Deogratias, "*Cum tardioribus [i.e. the rhetoricians] autem aliquanto pluribus verbis et simlitudinibus agendum est, ne contemnant quod vident.*"[45] While Augustine certainly betrays a certain amount of irritation with the vanities of the rhetoricians and grammarians by calling them *tardiores*[46], he nevertheless recommends that the Sacrament of Baptism be taught to them with 'many words' in order that they not despise it. This is to say that S. Augustine does not want them to reject this holy mystery for superficial reasons; Augustine shows a true desire for everyone to come to the font.

There is also a third group that Augustine concerns himself with that consists of those who have come to him not because of their learning, but rather because of mystical experiences.[47] He says that such individuals should prompt the teacher to discuss two key points: first, the love that God has shown toward that individual by granting to them such a

[45] *De Catechizandis,* xiii.
[46] In context, this is word is used to juxtapose them with those skilled in liberal arts, of whom he says: *sufficit prudentioribus [i.e. the learned] audire quid res illa [i.e. Baptism] significet.*
[47] It is interesting to note that Augustine does not reject these experiences outright, but accepts them as from God.

dream (or other such supernatural occurrence).[48] Second, he suggests that such a person ought to be directed away from these supernatural experiences to the Holy Scriptures, which are a '*solidiorem viam'* and also *'oracula certiora'*.[49]

His reasons for discussing these two points are also twofold. First, he wishes to encourage the individual to return the love that God has shown, as this is a major theme in the *DCR*[50]. Second, he wishes to provide his catechumens with a source of the sure will of God for them, which can be found in the Scriptures. This second point in particular again goes to highlight the care Augustine shows for his students, wishing to supply them with more than just security, but with something that will cause their faith to grow. In his own words, he wishes to supply such a catechumen with a path "*ubi non quaereret visibilia miracula, sed invisbilia sperare consueceret*"[51].

The fourth group that Augustine deals with is made up of two subgroups, viz. those that come to him with mixed motivations and those who come with entirely false motivations. This group as a whole is of particular importance to this study because it shows how in tune Augustine was with the social, religious and political climate of this day.[52] As regards the sub-group that has mixed motivations, he says that "*iam Deum timent, et non irrident Christianum nomen, nec simulato corde intrant Ecclesiam Dei, sed in ista vita exspectant felicitatem…*"[53] but

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[48] Ibid., x. He says: *Quod si forte se divinitus admonitum vel territum esse responderit, ut fieret Christianus, laetissimum nobis exordiendi aditum praebet, quanta Deo sit cura pro nobis.*
[49] Ibid.
[50] This point is addressed by the text cited in note 31, but the following text also makes this point clear: *Hac ergo dilectione tibi tamquam fine proposito, quo referas omnia quae dicis, quidquid narras ita narra, ut ille cui loqueris audiendo credat, credendo speret, sperando amet.* (Ibid., viii)
[51] Ibid., x.
[52] Of course, in saying this, as I mentioned in note 11, I do not mean that these categories ought to be completely compartmentalized, as modern Americans might be wont to do. There was certainly mixing of all these together in this day and age.
[53] Ibid., xxvi.

that they are "*tamen non [in] minore periculo*"[54]. These are contrasted with those pure individuals who come seeking to join the Christian Church "*propter requiem quae post hanc vitam speratur*"[55].

For those who are pure, Augustine willingly adjusted his catechetical program in a positive way, as seen above, but for the impure, all he can urge Deogratias to do is to focus on the eschatological implications of the Christian faith while sprinkling these admonitions with a dash of Neo-Platonic[56] salt for good measure. For Augustine, the need to admonish these individuals is critical, as they are not yet fallen from the faith, yet they risk doing so. In this, we see another example of the flexibility in Augustine's program. More will be said about the specifics of what Augustine taught this group in the following section.

The second portion of this group are those he calls those the '*reprobri*'[57], and he does not seem to make any special provisions for them in his catechetical program,[58] in contrast with the abovementioned groups. Because of his apparent lack of concern to modify his program for these individuals, there is little to be said that could lie in that same vein above. However, as mentioned in the second section of this work, after the rise of the Christian emperor Constantine, Christianity gradually became a politically powerful religion, and so those pagan statesmen aiming to rise in the ranks would have found Christianity suddenly appealing. Augustine recognizes this fact, and warns Deogratias again to examine his students to ascertain their motives, whether "*sunt … qui … volunt esse Christiani, ut aut promereantur homines a quibus*

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., xxiv.
[56] I say Neo-Platonic because the wording used by Augustine in the twenty-seventh chapter strikes me as such. He says: *Qui etiam proficiendo perveniet <u>ad talem animum</u>, ut plus amet Deum…*
[57] Ibid., xxvi.
[58] It is interesting how Augustine, through his silence here, he seems to be showing a certain belief in a type of double predestination, much in the same way Five-Point Calvinists might. However, this is a topic for another day.

temporalia commoda exspectant, aut quia offendere nolunt quos timent."[59] The pagan statesmen easily fall into the first category, and any number could fall into the second.

Yet, more interesting than mere recognition of the '*reprobri* problem' on Augustine's part is how he goes about handling it. It is interesting because, in his day, this problem was addressed in two major ways. The first way was the way of the rigorist Donatists, who, though unmentioned in this passage by name, are certainly the white elephant of the passage. This sect handled the problem of sinners existing in the congregation by refusing to accept anyone baptized by a Catholic, that is to say, by an impure soul. This, of course, is best exemplified in the origin of their sect, when they rejected the *traditor*-ordained Bishop Caecilian.[60]

So, while the Donatists claimed to be a church comprised wholly of holy saints, S. Augustine saw the true Church as being a "*mixtum compositum"*, to employ a rather apropos term used by the Reformers to describe this same issue. He, unlike the Donatists, did not believe it was the place of bishops, pastors or otherwise to sort the 'wheat from the chaff', as it were, by rejecting individuals from participation in the physical church. He himself says:

> *Neque hoc nos movere debet; quia multi diabolo consentiunt, et pauci Deum sequuntur; quia et frumentum in comparatione palearum valde pauciorem habet numerum. Sed sicut agricola novit quid faciat de ingenti acervo paleae, sic nihil est Deo multitudo peccatorum, qui novit quid de illis agat, ut administratio regni eius ex nulla parte turbetur atque turpetur. Nec ideo putandus est vicisse diabolus, quia secum plures, cum quibus a paucis vinceretur, adtraxit. Duae itaque civitates, una iniquorum, altera sanctorum, ab initio generis humani usque in finem saeculi*

[59] Ibid., xvii.
[60] Cross, *Donatism*, p. 415.

perducuntur, nunc permixtae corporibus, sed voluntatibus separatae, in die vero judicii etiam corpore separandae.[61]

Note in this quotation the comparison of God, not the bishop or any other ecclesiastical figure, to the farmer who separates the good wheat from the useless chaff. Additionally, note the passive phrasing at the end: *in die vero … separandae.* Clearly the one doing the separating on Judgement Day will be God, not Augustine or any bishop.

All of this is to say that Augustine did not reject those catechumens that came to him with wicked motivations. Of course, he is leery of them, as is evident by the abovementioned warnings to examine catechumens, but he does not outright force them out of the congregation either. His justification for this refusal to reject individuals is also noteworthy. He says the following to close the thirty-first chapter, "*Et tamen Deus misericordissimus, et super impios patiens est, et praebet eis paenitentiae atque correctionis locum.*"[62] The Church is a place where all those who come, even those with false motives, are offered a place to repent.

He goes on in the following chapter to compare Noah's ark to the Church, saying, "*Praenuntiabatur tamen etiam diluvii Sacramento quo per lignum iusti liberati sunt, futura Ecclesia quam Rex eius et Deus Christus mysterio suae crucis ab huius saeculi submersione suspendit.*"[63] This is to show that Augustine recognized a certain repeating pattern present in the Scriptures, a pattern that he dared not break as the Donatists did, for doing so would be to assume ignorance on God's part about the fact that the Church was a *mixtum compositum*.[64]

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[61] Augustine, *De Catechizandis*, xxxi.
[62] Ibid., xix.
[63] Ibid., xxxii.
[64] Ibid., xxxii. He says: *Neque enim Deus ignorabat, quod etiam ex illis qui fuerant in arca servati, nascituri errant mali, qui faciem terrae iniquitatibus iterum implerent.*

Even worse than assuming ignorance on God's part, breaking the pattern as the Donatists did would deprive God of a proper judgement of the world. This may seem an odd statement, but Augustine himself says that the pattern established originally in Noah's ark prefigures the future judgement of sinners and liberation of saints.[65] He says the ark, which was under construction for a hundred years, would have been a testimony to the corrupt people of Noah's age about the judgement of the flood. Likewise, the Church, which waits for the ultimate judgement, gives testimony to the current corrupt men about that judgement. To deprive impure people of this testimony by rejecting them from the Church as the Donatists do ultimately deprives God of His own due glory by preventing Him from making manifest His mercy to the world and from teaching his children thereof. This is precisely what Augustine means when he says:

> *Hoc autem facit Deus, etiam illis quos novit in malitia perseveraturos dans poeniteni spatium, ut nostrum patientiam exerceat et informet exemplo suo; quo noverimus quantum nos oporteat tolerabiliter malos sustinere, cum ignoremus quales postea futuri sunt, quando ille parcit et tinit eos vivere, quem nihil futurorum latet.*[66]

Even with this quote, much more could be said about Augustine's handling of the '*reprobri* problem' in both the *DCR* and elsewhere. However, this shall suffice for now, as the information presented thus far does show a fair amount of detail.

VI – The Theoretical Aspect

Thus far, the *DCR* has been examined in order to understand some of the practical steps taken by Augustine to achieve those catechetical goals mentioned in the fourth section.

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[65] Ibid. He says: *exemplum futuri iudicii [Deus] dedit, et sanctorum liberationem ligni mysterio praenuntiavit*.
[66] Ibid.

However, what remains to be discussed are the theoretical aspects of Augustine's program, that is, the curriculum that Augustine uses to teach the faith. While it is important to know *how* Augustine taught, i.e. by intimate acquaintance with his pupils, such knowledge would be less practical without a discussion of *what* was taught by him.

Building off the last idea put forward in the prior section, a major feature of Augustine's catechetical curriculum is Scripture. As Levering notes when discussing the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine held that there were two major components involved when one reads the Scriptures.[67] First, there was the basic need to understand what is read. However, just because this first step is the most basic part of reading the Scriptures, that should not imply that it was the easiest part. Without S. Ambrose's aid, Augustine would not have learned so quickly about the allegorical method of interpretation, which frequently appears in the *DCR* by way of typological interpretations. The second part of reading the Scriptures, then, was to teach what had been learned from them.

Yet, Augustine is not interested in learning from or teaching the Scriptures for their own sake. I mean to say, Augustine does read the Bible purely as literature or even as a modern Biblical scholar might with a mind to glean information about how X was in the time of Paul or a given prophet. Instead, S. Augustine reads the Scriptures, which, again, he calls *oracula certiora*, to learn what love is according to God, and so by learning what love is, to teach love, because having catechumens that love is among his primary catechetical goals.[68]

[67] Levering, *The Theology*, p. 3.
[68] Please recall the passage cited in footnote 33.

Of course, the notion of 'teaching love' is rather abstract in sense: what would it mean for Augustine to 'teach love' as part of his curriculum? This can only be answered by hearing in Augustine's own words, what he learned as the definition of love:

> *Neque enim ob aliud ante adventum Domini scripta sunt omnia quae in sanctis Scripturis legimus, nisi ut illius commendaretur adventus, et future praesignaretur Ecclesia, id est, populus Dei per omnes gentes, quod est corpus eius. ... Quae autem major caussa est adventus Domini, nisi ut ostenderet*[69] *Deus dilectionem suam in nobis, commendans eam vehementer; quia 'cum adhuc inimici essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est'*[70]*.*[71]

Thus, the ideal form of love, indeed the very definition of it, is made known [*ostenderet*] in the Incarnation and Crucifixion, that is the death, of Jesus. It is significant that he quotes Scripture here, as it furthers the point that he learned the definition of love from the Scriptures themselves.

With Augustine's definition of love (and source for that definition) established, the question of how he actually went about 'teaching love' to his catechumens can be addressed. He does this not just by saying "Jesus died for your sins" or by reading bits of Scripture to his students and leaving it there. Rather, he takes Scripture and weaves out of it a sort of salvific

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[69] The translation renders '*ostenderet*' merely as 'to show', and while this is not wrong *in se*, I find it inadequate. I believe that 'make known' is a more adequate translation here. The *Lewis and Short* does support such wording for 'ostendo'.
[70] Rom. v, 8, 10. This quotation is noted by the text's footnotes.
[71] Augustine, *De Catechizandis*, vi – vii.

history or *narratio*[72], enticing his readers with those "exact turning-points (of the history)"[73]. This history is developed primarily by using the method he learned from S. Ambrose, who taught that various passages of Scripture have 'spiritual senses' which can be uncovered.[74]

For Augustine then, there are only two senses with which one can read and therefore teach the Scriptures: carnally or spiritually. He says this:

> *Quapropter in veteri Testamento est occultatio novi, in novo Testameto est manifestatio veteris. Secundum illa occultationem carnaliter intelligentes carnales, et tunc et nunc poenali timore subiugati sunt. Secundum hanc autem manifestationem spiritales, et tunc quibus pie pulsantibus etiam occulta patuerunt, et nunc qui non superbe quaerunt, ne etiam aperta claudantur, spiritaliter intelligentes donata caritate liberati sunt.*[75]

Because those coming to him as students are not yet spiritual[76] (and so called *rudes)*, Augustine sees it as his duty to give them the spiritual meanings of the Scriptures so that they do not hear them with the "veil"[77] [*occultation*] of their carnal interpretation still in place. By giving them the spiritual senses of passages, he desires them to see not merely the history of the Israelites (or whichever group), but also how God had planned so long ago to save them in the

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[72] Ibid., v. He says: *Narratio plena est, cum quisque primo catechizatur ab eo quod scriptum est, 'In principio fecit Deus caelum et terram', usque ad praesentia tempora Ecclesia.* For further reading on the implications of this term, see Harmless, Chapter 4, pp. 107ff.
[73] *On the Catechizing*, Chapter 3, p. 285. The translation here does a superb job of capturing and condensing the sense of Latin in this portion of the text.
[74] See the first chapter of Levering's work (pp. 1 – 18) for a summary of the finer points of how this system of spiritual senses functions.
[75] *De Catechizandis*, viii.
[76] Ibid., iv. He describes those coming to Deogratias as *qui fide imbuendi sunt*, that is, they are not Christians and so not spiritual.
[77] This is the word used by the English translation, and it is a fitting translation of the Latin here.

present. He uses the story of the flood, as mentioned above, to show one way in which this plays out.

He also uses the story of the Babylonian captivity of Israel as a way to show this salvific history. He explains that Jerusalem is a type of the Church, Babylon is one of the "city and fellowship of the wicked", and that "these two [groups], which have been running their courses, mingling the one with the other, through all the changes of time from the beginning of the human race, … are destined to be separated at the last judgment".[78] He then wraps up the actual history by saying that God saved the Israelites at the end of a seventy-year period. He then connects the actual carnal or real historical sense of the story to the underlying spiritual sense, saying, "*Omnia enim quae nunc vides in Ecclesia Dei, et sub Christi nomine per totum orbem terrarum geri, ante saecula iam praedicta sunt, et sicut ea legimus, ita et videmus; et inde aedificamur in fidem.*"[79]

This then is only one of many examples that Augustine gives in the *DCR* to teach the spiritual sense of Scripture. He sets up so many of these Scripture lessons because he knows of no better way for his students to be taught to love than to see how many ways in which God shows his love for them. He says it this way, "*Nulla est enim maior ad amorem invitatio, quam praevenire amando."*[80] The more he unveils the spiritual sense to unspiritual people, the more they will be invited into a love of God.

VII – Baptism as a Manifestation of God's Love

[78] *On the Catechizing,* Chapter 21, pp. 305-6.
[79] *De Catechizandis,* liii. He goes on in the intervening chapters to narrate all those 'turning points of the history' that he mentioned, and closes all of them with this quote.
[80] Ibid., vii.

Taking into account how important the spiritual sense of Scripture is to Augustine, it is not difficult to understand then why Baptism, and more so, education about Baptism, was so especially important to him. For Augustine, Baptism then is the fulfillment of many of those types of salvation presented throughout the Old Testament. The flood story of Noah is a type and so is the crossing of the Red Sea, and both of these find their completion in the antitype of Baptism for the current age of the salvific history that Augustine weaves. Baptism is the way, in Augustine's theology, that God saves his people in the current age. It is literally a pouring out of God's love onto his people, a love made manifest in his doing away with their sins. Augustine has no desire for men to dive into this Sacrament without having them first understand the depth of what that means, for to do so would be to miss what God is doing in the immediate.

He says this also of Baptism:

> *Utrumque signum [i.e. the flood and crossing of the Red Sea] est Sancti Baptismi, per quod fideles in novam vitam transeunt, peccata vero eorum tamquam inimici delentur atque moriuntur.*[81]

This passing from death to life and removing of sins in Baptism is also why Baptism is so fittingly done at Easter. Augustine says as much:

> *Apertius autem Christi passio in illo populo figurata est, cum jussi sunt ovem occidere et maducare, et de sanguine eius postes suos signare, et hoc celebrare omni anno, et appellare Pascha Domini. Manifestissime quippe prophetia de Domino Jesu Christo dicit, quia 'tamquam ovis ad immolandum ductus est'. Cuius*

[81] Ibid., xxxiv.

Passionis et crucis signo in fronte hodie tamquam in poste signandus es, omnesque Christiani signantur.[82]

Therefore, at Easter, when the Church celebrates the resurrection of the Lord, those being baptized may too celebrate being brought to life by means of Baptism.

VIII – Conclusions

As was said at the beginning, Augustine is a monumental man to take on as a scholar. That said, this study is by no means exhaustive of Augustine in any sense, but rather it provides a snapshot of who Augustine was as a teacher in one particular text among many. In this text, once the historical setting has been established and factored in, it is not difficult to get a good glimpse at one side of this multifaceted saint.

Augustine, in the *DCR* shows himself to be not only deeply learned in the Scriptures, but also greatly concerned to teach what he knows. He reveals himself to be a personable teacher who wants to know his students on an intimate level so that he might help them to come into the Church with a deep appreciation for her. He shows a remarkable flexibility in his program, changing his style to suit the needs of different hearers, yet doing so without sacrificing the substance of what was taught. He also shows a remarkable aptitude for understanding the cultural climate of his day and adapting his catechetical program to address his contemporary issues. Finally, we see him setting forth a stunning curriculum that combines historical knowledge and a complex theology into a type of interpretive matrix for the Scriptures. He then

[82] Ibid.

uses this interpretive system to teach the faith to his students and to drive them to love as they have been loved.

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